

Examination of Primary Teacher Candidates' Experiences in Distance Education Teaching Practices

Işner Severⁱ
Hakkari University

Abstract

In this research, we aimed to examine and understand the experiences of the participants regarding the teaching practice courses held with distance education during the pandemic. The participants of the research are all eight students who took teaching practice courses in the primary school education program of a university in Turkey in the 2020-2021 academic year. The research was designed as basic qualitative research. Research data were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted via video call individually with the participants. Content analysis was used for data analysis. Results show that participants experienced problems due to the lack of interaction with the primary school students and practice teachers. In the problems that arise in the distance education process; we can say that the lack of infrastructure, knowledge and experience of the stakeholders are effective. It is necessary to eliminate the infrastructure problems related to distance education and to provide information and experience to the stakeholders by integrating distance education into formal education processes. In this way, we can be prepared for the next pandemics or similar extraordinary situations.

Keywords: Distance Education, Elementary Education, Pandemic, Teacher Education, Teaching Practices

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ⁱ **Işner Sever**, Assist. Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education, Hakkari University, ORCID: 0000-0001-5381-6976

Email: isinersever@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus epidemic has significantly affected health, economy, life and education. The pandemic has caused the closure of educational institutions from pre-school to higher, worldwide. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2020), as of April 2020, schools were closed in 188 countries worldwide. More than 90% of the student population was affected by this process. Countries have taken measures such as restrictions, mass/partial closures, and suspending face-to-face education in educational institutions to minimise the pandemic's effects. Within the scope of the measures mentioned above, schools affiliated with national education have been suspended in Turkey since mid-March (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2020). In the following period, these schools were opened and closed again according to the course of the pandemic. The Council of Higher Education [YÖK], on the other hand, has decided that the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year will be carried out by open and distance learning at universities (YÖK, 2020). Along with the decisions taken in the next process, as of May 2021, training in fields (other than some applied fields such as health and veterinary) will continue as open and distance learning.

As a result of the transition to open and distance education [DE], universities started to work to continue their current education. With the decision to open and DE within the scope of pandemic, universities have started to work to continue their current education. Infrastructures have been established, and necessary training have been given to personnel and students. However, it can be said that this preparation process was problematic because there were existing deficiencies, and it was difficult to eliminate them. With the transition to DE, it can be said that the number of universities that can teach all their courses simultaneously is only six (Durak, et al., 2020). The remaining universities don't own the infrastructure to simultaneously perform DE activities during the pandemic's first period or have difficulties establishing this infrastructure. This finding shows how unprepared we are for the deficiencies in DE in higher education institutions. Apart from universities' infrastructure problems, there have been some problems in the training of instructors and that this was the most difficult process (Durak, et al., 2020). The shortcomings mentioned in the transition process to DE constitute a part of the problems. Another problem is the access, knowledge, and experience of students regarding DE. Studies have concluded that students having trouble to reach the internet, they are not well enough in using technology, they do not have a space reserved for them at home, and they do not see DE as the education system of the future (Altınpulluk, 2021; Karahan et al., 2020; Karatepe et al., 2020; Koç, 2020; Yolcu, 2020).

The measures taken in education to reduce the pandemic's effects brought the problems, some of which were mentioned above, to light. It has been predicted that the measures taken will increase existing inequalities in education, have more serious consequences for disadvantaged groups, students will lose access to healthy food offered to them in schools, and the socialisation problem will have psychological effects. It has been stated that it is important to find solutions to these problems (Giannini & Lewis, 2020). It is essential to solve students' difficulty of accessing DE technologies to ensure the effectiveness of DE passed within the pandemic's scope and not to deepen the existing inequalities. The pandemic shows us that we need to focus on DE. It is possible to say that DE has taken an important place in our understanding of education and will continue increasing its weight in our education systems. For this reason, it is important to focus on research on DE, to reveal the current situations and to propose solutions.

Research on DE increased with the closures arising from the pandemic. These researches were carried out in a wide range of disciplines ranging from students, teachers, and lecturers (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Görgülü Arı & Hayır Kanat, 2020; Niemi & Kouse, 2020). In addition, compilation studies on DE (Bozkurt, 2020; Can, 2020; Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020) were also carried out. When the literature is searched, it's been determined that there are few studies (Eti & Karaduman, 2020; Koç, 2020; Piştav Akmeşe & Kayhan, 2021) on the implementation of teaching practices within the scope of DE.

In the teaching practice lesson, it is aimed that the preservice teacher gain teaching experience for two semesters in the designated practice schools. In this process, pre-service teachers attend classes at the levels they will teach, accompanied by the supervision and guidance of the designated practice teachers and practice instructors. In parallel with this, pre-service teachers attend follow-up meetings with the practice instructor once a week, evaluate the process, and assign internship activities. Teaching practices make significant contributions to the professional development of teacher candidates with the opportunity for social interaction and participation within the school context (Walshaw, 2004). With the DE in pandemic, it has been decided to carry out DE in schools under MEB through Information Network in Education [EBA] TV and EBA Live Lesson Platform (MEB, 2020). Teaching practices were also carried out on the EBA Live Lesson Platform under the supervision of practice teachers. Pre-service teachers participated in this platform and performed teaching practices once a week. Students also participated in distance assessment meetings with their instructors once a week. When other countries took steps towards teacher education after closures, it can be said that they showed similar reflexes with Turkey. With the closure, countries have started broadcasting on national channels for pre-higher education and continue their education activities through DE platforms. Teaching practices were similarly carried out in the form of pre-service teachers participating in classroom environments on these platforms and organising meetings with university-level lecturers and teacher candidates (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; König et al., 2020; Flores & Gago, 2020; Moorhouse, 2020; Niemi & Kousa, 2020). It can be said that the differentiations take place in the dimension of facilitating the access of countries to infrastructures such as the internet, computer, and software required for DE.

It is essential to research the process of conducting this course, which is aimed and designed for teacher candidates to gain experience in face-to-face education in real classroom environments, virtual classrooms, and DE meetings. Within this scope, the research aims to understand student experiences related to the distance execution of the teaching practice taught in the 4th-grade education programs in the applied courses category that aim for teacher candidates to gain experiences about the teaching profession. The researcher being of the facilitators of the teaching practice course provided a chance to make first-hand observations about the process. The research is considered important in examining the distance learning and teaching experiences of teacher candidates in the distance teaching practice course, revealing the existing problems and presenting solutions.

Within the scope of the research, answers to the following sub-questions were sought;

1. What are the experiences of teacher candidates in the transition to DE after closures?
2. What are the experiences of pre-service teachers regarding distance teaching practice?
3. What are teacher candidates' views on DE in line with their experiences with DE?

METHOD

Research Model

The research was designed as basic qualitative research, as it was desired to explore the participants' experiences and how they made sense of these experiences. Qualitative research examines how people interpret and give meaning to their experiences. Qualitative research aims to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study aimed to examine and understand the experiences of the 4th-grade education department students (who switched to DE during the pandemic process) regarding the teaching practice courses carried out with DE.

Participants

The research participants are eight students who took the teaching practice courses in Hakkari University Basic Education Department Classroom Education Program in the 2020-2021 academic year. Participants are taking the teaching practice course for the first time. Their face-to-face experience regarding the primary school classroom environment is limited to their observations in the previous school year. Due to the pandemic, the participants could not go to primary schools as part of the teaching practice course. Below is some information about the participants' access to technology and their perceptions of efficacy regarding technology use.

Participants' Access to Technology

Information was obtained from the participants to learn their internet and computer access status. In line with the information obtained, it was determined that only two of the 8 participants had no access problems. It can be said that other participants had access problems at the beginning of the process, and they tried to overcome these deficiencies. In short, most of the participants did not have the necessary infrastructure for DE at the beginning of the process. With the transition to DE, they tried to eliminate these deficiencies. The opinions of the participants regarding their current situation are given below.

I think that I have successfully passed DE through my personal workspace, personal computer and phone. (Ahmet)

I don't have a computer; my brother has a desktop. At first, I struggled with preparing the computer and finding a camera. We had a lot of internet problems. I had to buy internet all the time; it wasn't enough. (Ezgi)

I couldn't connect to the internet; there is no infrastructure here. I made an internet package, 20 GB. I can also attend other classes. I had no internet-related problems. (Can)

At first, I had an internet problem, and there was no computer. I had to buy internet. I had to buy a computer from relatives. (Ozge)

Although half of the participants have passed one year in DE, it has been determined that they still have infrastructure deficiencies, connect to classes by phone, and experience problems with internet access.

Technology Competence Perceptions of Participants

Participants think that their ability to use technology is sufficient to carry out the DE process. However, some problems students experienced (included in the findings) stemmed from their ability to use DE technologies.

In general, I think that I am sufficient in the use of technology. I can easily adapt. (Ahmet)

I'm not that good with technology, but my proficiency was enough for me during this DE process. (Can)

We tried to develop ourselves technologically. Literally, before that, I couldn't say that I had this competence, I could do these things, but I saw that I am not so bad. (Ali)

Data Collection and Analysis

The research data were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted remotely, via video, with the participants. Content analysis was used for data analysis. Content analysis is defined as a method used in the coding process of qualitative information to identify, analyse, and report patterns

in raw data (Boyatzis, 1998). In the interviews, a semi-structured interview form prepared by the expert opinion was used. After the first interviews were done and the data were analysed, the second interviews were conducted based on these data. Apart from the semi-structured interviews, additional data were collected by re-communicating with the students when necessary. In addition, students were observed and notes were taken during the two semesters. In this respect, it can be said that the research and data collection process was carried out in an academic year and covered the entire pandemic period from beginning to end. Direct quotations are included to ensure transferability. Within the scope of confirmability, research data and analyses were submitted to expert opinion and approval was obtained.

Semi-structured interview questions related to the interviews with the participants are given below.

1. What can you say about your distance teaching practice experience? What does this process mean to you?
2. Did you have any problems during this process? If so, what were these problems?
 - a. What could be the source of your problems?
 - i. Were these problems related to the remote realization of the process, or did the pandemic also have effects? If so, what were these effects?
 - b. Do you have any suggestions for solving the problems you are experiencing, and if so, what are they?
3. Were you able to get support from the institutions and teachers regarding the DE process?
4. When you compare the distance and face-to-face education processes, what do you think are these processes' positive and negative aspects?
 - a. What kind of training would you like in the next process? What do you think should be the place of DE in our education system?

Ethical Procedures

The researcher declares that ethical principles and rules are followed during the planning of the research, data collection, analysis and reporting. The relevant ethics committee decision was declared to the journal.

RESULTS

According to the interviews with the participants, some findings were reached. These findings are titled under the themes of transition to DE, problems related to DE and teaching practice, problems caused by closure, advantages of DE, and participants' preferences for distance/face-to-face education. Themes and categories are given in Figure 1 below.

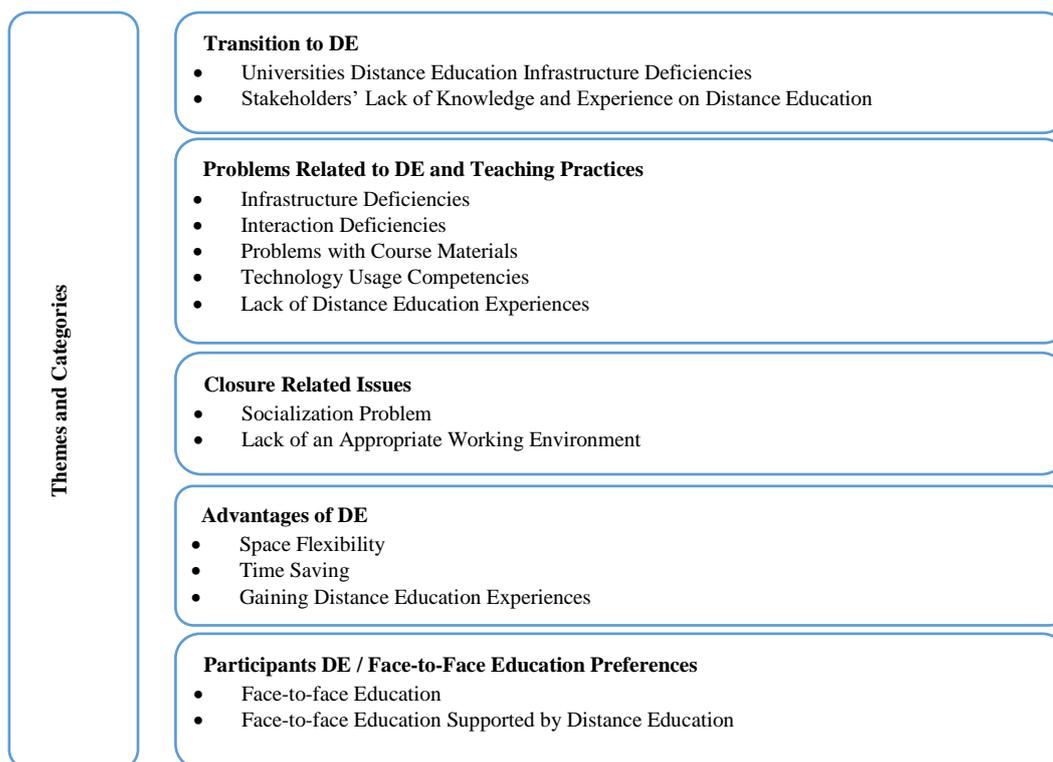


Figure 1. Themes and categories

Transition to DE

With the closure carried out within the scope of pandemic measures, they had to rapidly transition to DE in March 2020 in higher education. In this process, universities carried out studies to establish the necessary infrastructure and eliminate the existing deficiencies. It is expressed in the participants' opinions that some problems are experienced with the transition to DE. One of these problems is that the infrastructure of the institutions regarding DE is not ready. However, it was stated that there were some differences between universities during the transition process. The views of the participant who was at another university as part of the Farabi Student Exchange Program at the beginning of the pandemic that returned to his university are given below.

+ At that time, I was not at school. I was on the other side; it was pretty bad there. There was no system. There were quite a few disconnections until the system infrastructure was formed. Each teacher was trying to teach from a different application.

-The other side is ... University?

+Yes, there was no video or application like ours. For example, we do it through Meet, and they didn't have such a thing. Only some teachers could give lessons via Zoom, not even all of them, only two of them could. There was no video or audio lesson processing; we could only send messages. Not all teachers did that either. I remember finishing the whole semester with homework. They were uploading homework to the system every week, and we were trying to do them. (Ayse)

Another problem in the transition process is the lack of knowledge and experience of instructors, teachers, and students about DE and the technical infrastructure to be used in DE. The students stated that the transition to DE was problematic due to the problems mentioned above.

Participants think that guiding instructors and teachers contribute to eliminating the problems to some extent.

Indeed, we entered this process hastily. No one had any preparation or infrastructure. There was preparation throughout schools, but I don't know how much this reflected on us, the lessons, or the teachers. I did not think that most of our teachers or us had a complete technological infrastructure. It was a problem for all of us that there was no complete preparation in this regard. (Ali)

Experiencing similar negativities in environments where the technical infrastructure is sufficient shows how important it is for instructors to master DE technologies. Since instructors did not have the necessary knowledge and experience about DE caused some problems in the transition process.

I did not expect Hakkari to be so equipped. Ours has been a very quick transition. ... the teacher would immediately say that your internship will be like this and run the process. We made a quick transition. Of course, we encountered a lot of negativities because the teachers did not have much experience. When teachers wanted something from us, we couldn't do it, or the teachers couldn't do it. Some teachers didn't know how to use computers, so we had many problems with lessons. (Ezgi)

Problems Related to DE and Teaching Practices

Based on the interviews with the participants, it was understood that there were some problems in the DE and teaching practice processes. It is possible to collect these problems under the titles of infrastructure problems, interaction problems, problems related to course materials, technology usage competencies, and lack of experience in DE.

Infrastructure problems come first among the problems experienced by the participants. Participants stated that they had difficulty reaching internet and DE platforms during the DE process.

Zoom was closing a lot at times. It kept kicking me out of the system, and sometimes I couldn't use it even though the teacher made me an admin. This has happened many times. The lesson got interrupted. Until the teacher reconnected me, there were problems in the lesson for about 5 minutes. To be honest, it was difficult. (Ayse)

You prepare and enter the lesson; despite all the impossibilities, your internet connection is disconnected during the lesson. During that time, all of your motivation and productivity decreases. You can't show yourself enough. I think it killed my creativity in a way. We can do very different things in a school setting. In this way, we acted with a little more limitations. (Oznur)

Another problem encountered is the lack of interaction originating from DE in the teaching practice process. Participants stated that they could not interact adequately with the other students and that this lack of interaction caused them to have difficulties in teaching practices.

We could not maintain healthy communication with the students. Had it been face-to-face, these problems would have been overcome. I think we have a lack of experience in communicating and interacting in DE. (Ali)

Imagine that you can make eye contact with students in a tangible environment, in a classroom, and you can understand whether they are learning or not. It is more difficult to do this in DE. We can hardly see the student's reaction concretely. We cannot understand this. It can't be like a face-to-face environment. (Ozge)

Similarly, the participants experienced communication problems due to the lack of interaction with the practice teachers.

Frankly, I was not very happy with the process. Because we did not meet face-to-face with our teachers, we could not fully understand each other. (Gul)

It can be said that the participants have different experiences in communicating with their teachers during distance teaching practices. While some of the students expressed that they were satisfied with this process, others stated it was quite difficult. The teachers approach in the process is effective in the emergence of this difference.

We frequently talked on the phone and texted our teacher before and after the lesson and during the preparation phase. Some friends had problems with this matter. But I think we have very good communication with our teacher. (Ahmet)

Our practice teachers need to be more interested in us. Some didn't care about us. They responded to messages late, didn't give feedback, and didn't do what they were supposed to do. (Ezgi)

When the students' opinions are examined, it is understood that the mentioned difference in experience stems from the communication between the practice teachers and the participants. Participants stated that some intern teachers do not establish the necessary communication with the students and do not provide feedback and corrections. In response to this problem, it was stated that the instructors were not very successful in producing a solution.

+ I think our lessons with you went well. We were telling you our problems, and you were offering solutions, but sometimes these suggestions were not enough. Some of my friends had a lot of trouble. I think you couldn't find a solution for these.

-What kind of problems were these?

+ For example, I said that my teacher does not give much feedback. But I don't know if you talked to the teachers about this. Or the teachers of our other friends didn't take an interest in them. I think you could've found the right solutions for them. (Ezgi)

Participants also stated that they have problems with various materials used within the scope of teaching practices. One of the participants stated that the electronic materials he prepared for the lesson did not attract students' attention after a while. Another participant stated that he had problems using the physical material he had prepared online. Another participant stated that he used a classroom board at the beginning of the DE process, but he then had problems because he could not reach this material. Considering the variety of electronic materials that can be developed and used in educational settings, it is unlikely that students will find these materials interesting after a while. The problem here can be explained by the participant's constant use of the same or similar materials. However, it is understood that the participants also tend to use face-to-face education equipment and materials in DE environments.

We always tried to use online materials, and after a while, students became bored. Because the same monotonous things were starting to happen all the time, if it was face-to-face rather than remote, we could use different materials by designing them for different situations. (Ali)

For example, I always had trouble with the materials. For example, I was doing something, but when I showed it to the students, it was more difficult to do it one by one. It wasn't going the way I wanted. (Ayse)

It has been determined that students experience problems arising from their technology use proficiency in distance teaching practices. Regardless of infrastructure problems, students' ability to use DE technologies negatively affected their teaching practices. The tendency of the participants to use face-to-face training materials online is also reflected in these quotations. It is thought that the participants have deficiencies in using DE technologies; therefore, they try to adapt traditional tools and materials to DE. It can be stated that the problems they experience with the materials stem from this tendency.

We used the screen we use in DE as a touch board. Students' were scribbling on the board, and we later learned to block them through the system. But I had a lot of trouble until I learned this. (Ahmet)

I didn't know much about the apps we were going to use. It was difficult to prepare something every time and to research something. Depending on the subject of the lesson, the application could be different. (Ozge)

It has been determined that some of the situations that the participants defined as infrastructure problems arise from their competence in using DE technologies. The situations mentioned in the quotes are not internet access or hardware problems, but the problems caused by using DE tools.

At first, I was doing activities through Okulistik, where I was teaching. I couldn't attend the event. It was visible on my computer but not on the students' screen. There were always such infrastructure problems. (Can)

In this process, most of the problems were internet-based. I also had internet-based problems. Internet interruption, sometimes the inability to transfer the sound to the other party, and problems mirroring the screen to the other side. (Ali)

The participants stated that they lacked experience related to DE and that the problems experienced in the process were due to this. Participants stated that they would not have experienced these problems had they gained knowledge and experience about DE during the education process.

We could have progressed much more easily in this field if we had used online opportunities and had prior knowledge of the education process we have received so far. But we started poorly in many areas; we started without knowing many applications. This was the problem at the root of the process. (Oznur)

The process was a little different. It was unusual. We switched to DE directly due to the pandemic; naturally, we had some problems. (Ahmet)

Considering all the problems encountered in the process, there is a productivity problem related to the distance teaching practice process, and students could not benefit from the teaching practice process as desired. Participants stated that they could not gain the required teaching experiences within the scope of the teaching practice course.

When it was face-to-face, we would have to go to school. Students would see us. We would be able to see how our friends and teachers were teaching. It would be more effective if it were face-to-face. (Gul)

For example, I had many question marks in my head. I think that these can be solved better face-to-face. At least we can benefit from the experience of our internship teacher. That process could have progressed better; it could have been more efficient. (Oznur)

Closure Related Issues

It was determined that the participants had problems with socialisation due to the closure during the teaching practice process. In this process, it was observed that students had difficulties in adapting to new lifestyles. It can be said that the problems related to socialisation are also reflected in the education processes of the students.

I was very bored at home. I couldn't socialise because I was away from my friends. I didn't get much out of the lessons. I just got the benefit of the internship. That was only because I did something myself. (Ezgi)

Normally, we could do whatever we wanted at school, but suddenly we were stuck at home. Now we are home, we can hardly go to a market, there is a disease, there is this there is that. Where are you going? Sit at home etc. We are completely enclosed within four walls. It's really bad. I can't see a friend or do anything else. No activity, nothing. I just live in the village. (Ayse)

On the other hand, it can be said that students who need less socialisation outside are less affected by the closure process.

The pandemic did not affect me because I am always at home. If I don't have work to go out, I don't go out much. It didn't affect me that much. (Can)

I don't think the pandemic has affected me. Being at home all the time is not something that affects me too much. I was already a person who liked to hang out at home. (Ozge)

Another problem observed regarding closure occurs when students return to their family home during this period. Some students' physical opportunities in their family homes are more limited than in their schools. This situation has caused students to experience problems in the DE process.

I live in the village. There was wifi in our house, but the wifi was bad. I had to use my mobile data. I've been renewing packages ... Our house is a bit crowded, teacher. While studying, for example, although the room is only for my sister and me, there are still many people coming and going. There are too many children. Studying when it's too loud is difficult. If we were in a dormitory, we could have our own room, study rooms, and we could do our work. (Ayse)

Everyone has limited opportunities in DE. There are people in a house that are very crowded. I'm in it too. We had a lot of trouble with opening the camera in lessons. You can't always be decent. (Ozge)

In line with the ideas obtained from the interviews and the observations, it was determined that the problems were related to the nature of DE and infrastructure problems rather than the effects of the pandemic/closure.

When the pandemic first started, classes were not held. Nobody knew what to do. But then, after the classes started, I think it was just about being remote. So I think the problem is related to DE itself. (Gul)

Advantages of DE

When the views on the advantages of DE are examined, the participants agree on the flexibility of space and time savings offered by DE. Participants see the ability to attend DE lessons from anywhere and save time from physically going to school for lessons as positive aspects of DE.

We were waking up 1.5 hours before going to school. But it's not like that at home; we can get up 10-15 minutes before the beginning of the lesson. It was positive in that respect. Other than that, I don't think there is anything positive. (Ezgi)

We could attend the class wherever we wanted. There are times when I participate from the bus, when I travel, or when I'm at home. You can attend your class at any time, and you can be active at any time. You cannot otherwise. You have to be at school. Online is more comfortable in terms of time. (Gul)

Another area participants see as positive in DE is that they know of DE technologies and gain experiences conducting DE courses.

It contributes a lot in terms of learning computer applications related to DE. We do not know whether such a pandemic will occur again in the future. If we become teachers, it has been of great benefit. (Gul)

Although the participants have gained knowledge and experience in DE and its technologies, they think that they will have problems in the future due to their lack of experience in face-to-face classroom environments.

Frankly, I think that our course being remote gives us a lot of knowledge about how to use technological applications. I learned a lot of applications that I will use in the future. It's good, but I think I will miss it a lot because I can't do this in a tangible class. (Ozge)

Another situation that emerged from the interviews is the perspectives of the participants on DE. Participants DE; rather than being a system with different advantages, they perceive it as "the remote form of face-to-face education". However, the participants see DE as a difficult and troublesome process. They believe that if they can be successful in DE, they can be much more successful in face-to-face education. It can be said that the phrase "despite DE", which is frequently encountered in interviews, is remarkable.

We know that if we have been able to get through this process successfully, we can progress very easily and very well in face-to-face education since the opportunities are much more diverse. If we can overcome these problems, we can be much more successful in face-to-face education. (Oznur)

We improved ourselves with the feedback you gave us. It was useful, even from away. (Ezgi)

Participants DE / Face-to-Face Education Preferences

Participants were asked to compare and pick between DE and face-to-face education. It is seen that they cannot get enough efficiency from DE. They prefer face-to-face education and believe that DE should complement face-to-face education.

A model in which face-to-face education is predominant but incorporated with DE may be better. But I would prefer face-to-face education as it provides better teacher-student interactions. (Ahmet)

After the pandemic is over, it is necessary to go face-to-face. I prefer to do a face-to-face internship rather than a distance internship. (Ezgi)

It can be said that the reason why the participants do not prefer DE is the interaction, infrastructure, and efficiency problems related to DE mentioned in the paragraphs above.

I think that face-to-face training can be more productive. When I enter a classroom, we are in constant interaction with the teacher. I can easily ask the questions I want. I'm not very

comfortable with this application. Some of our teachers will show us a slide, but then the teacher's internet freezes or the screen does not appear. There were such problems. Therefore, the positive aspects of face-to-face education are greater. (Can)

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Within the scope of pandemic measures, it can be said that some problems have arisen with the transition to DE in higher education. Universities have carried out DE using different infrastructures and approaches in this transition. While some universities can carry out the DE process mixedly as synchronously and asynchronously, most universities have had difficulties establishing the infrastructure for synchronous education. In the research of Durak, et al. (2020), it was determined that the number of universities that can teach all their courses simultaneously is six. It can be said that the infrastructure and approaches used directly affect the quality of the DE process in universities.

Infrastructure problems are at the forefront of the problems experienced in DE, especially teaching practices. At the end of the interviews, it was determined that the participants had difficulties accessing the internet and computers. It was observed that only two of the eight interviewed participants had problem-free internet access and had a computer for DE. In contrast, others tried to overcome their deficiencies in the process but could not solve their current problems completely. It has also been determined in similar studies that students have infrastructure deficiencies (Altınpulluk, 2021; Karahan et al., 2020; Karatepe et al., 2020; Yolcu, 2020). Even at the end of a year spent in DE, it was determined that half of the participants still had problems accessing the internet and were connected to the lessons with a smartphone. It can be said that this situation poses a serious problem regarding the quality of DE provided.

It was observed that the participants experienced problems due to the lack of interaction within the scope of teaching practices. The participants stated that they had difficulties interacting with the students in the teaching practices with DE. Problems related to the lack of interaction in DE have also been identified in similar studies (Başaran et al., 2020; Kurnaz & Serçemeli, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar, Morrison, 2020; Yolcu, 2020). The fact that the participants who do not have teaching experiences tried to carry out the process with DE made the process even more difficult for them. In this process, the differences in communication between the practice teachers and the participants caused their experiences to differ. It was observed that this process was quite troublesome for the participants who could not establish sufficient communication with the practice teachers and could not receive feedback and corrections. It is thought that the emerging communication problem is caused by the difficulties that teachers have in their classrooms with DE and the increasing workload with the process. The study of Sari & Nayir (2020), in which UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank compiled reports on the pandemic, also overlaps with this idea. Although the practice instructors, who are aware of this process, tried to solve the problems stemming from the practice teachers, they could not be effective due to the inability to meet them face-to-face and make school visits.

It has been determined that the participants tend to use physical materials that can be used in face-to-face education in DE. Naturally, they have problems with these materials. Due to the deficiencies of the participants in using DE technologies, they are trying to adapt the tools and materials suitable for face-to-face education to DE. It was determined that some of the problems that the participants identified as infrastructure problems stemmed from their technology use proficiency. Participants also stated that they lack knowledge and experience in DE and DE technologies. Yolcu (2020) also identified that primary school teacher candidates do not have sufficient readiness for DE.

The lack of knowledge and experience of the instructors, practice teachers, and students about DE, all of the mentioned infrastructure and communication problems have revealed a productivity problem in DE teaching practices. The participants think that they cannot gain the necessary teaching experience during the teaching practice process and will have problems while giving face-to-face training in their professional lives. In the study of Serçemeli & Kurnaz (2020), it is stated that nearly half of the participants think that make-up courses are necessary after the pandemic. Yolcu (2020)

determined that most classroom teacher candidates experienced the fear that their education would be incomplete. From this point of view, it can be said that similar problems are experienced in different places.

Some problems emerged with the closure during the pandemic process. One of these problems was the inability to meet the need for socialisation. Participants stated that the problem of socialisation was also reflected in their educational processes. It was observed that the participants who needed socialisation were more affected by this aspect than the other participants. The Covid-19 outbreak has shown us that schools meet the need for socialisation and the purpose of providing information. Despite the virtual interactions established in school communities and social networks, DE creates an obstacle in the educational relationship between teacher and student. The main task of the school system, closely related to student performance, is to ensure the student's overall well-being (Colao et al., 2020).

Another problem with closure arose when students returned to their family homes. Participants who had limited physical opportunities at their family home and those at school experienced problems in the DE process. These participants had difficulties in creating their own space in their family homes and accessing the internet. This situation negatively affected the education processes of the participants. The research of Koç (2020) and Yolcu (2020) shows that students who do not have a suitable environment for home education experience difficulties in attendance, attention, and motivation.

In line with the information obtained from the interviews and observations during the course processes, it was understood that the problems experienced by the participants were mainly related to the structure and requirements of DE. Students were not affected by the negativities caused by the pandemic but rather by the negativities of the DE process. It can be said that the lack of infrastructure, knowledge, and experience required for DE of the participants, teachers, and instructors are effective in the emergence of these negativities.

One of the issues on which the participants agree on the advantages of DE is the flexibility of space offered by DE and the time savings provided by this flexibility. It can be said that similar studies support this finding (Kurnaz & Serçemeli, 2020; Serçemeli & Kurnaz, 2020; Yolcu, 2020). It can be said that the experience gained in this process is also positive for the instructors (Altınpulluk, 2021). It is noteworthy that the experience of the participants regarding the advantages of DE is limited. This situation can be interpreted as they could not benefit from the advantages of DE, and the process could not be carried out in a qualified manner.

The interviews reveal a remarkable situation in the perspectives of the participants regarding DE. Participants do not see DE as a system with different advantages. The participants perceive DE as a form of face-to-face education in front of the camera. It is thought that the instructors' approach to DE is also effective in the emergence of this perception. In this process, it was observed that the instructors also tried to adapt face-to-face education tools to DE. It is thought that this situation is due to the instructors' lack of knowledge and experience regarding DE. Durak, et al.'s (2020) research state that the most difficult issue in the preparation process for DE is the training of instructors. Participants often used the word "despite DE" in the interviews. When the participants were asked about their preferences between DE and face-to-face education, they stated that they would prefer face-to-face education as a priority and that DE should be a complementary element. In the study of Serçemeli & Kurnaz (2020), it is stated that more than half of the participants think that face-to-face education should continue after the pandemic, and they will not prefer DE. It can be said that the problems experienced in the DE process are largely effective in the emergence of this situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The pandemic has brought to light our shortcomings in DE. The research results show that the problems experienced are related to DE rather than the pandemic itself. In this process, it has been

understood that problems arise from the lack of knowledge and experience in the university, lecturer, and student dimensions. Considering that DE will have a significant place in the education systems of the future, it can be said that eliminating the existing deficiencies is important for keeping up with the changes. In this regard, it is thought that it is necessary for universities to establish DE systems and to solve existing problems. The research results show that the problems experienced in DE are caused by both students and instructors' lack of knowledge, experience, and infrastructure regarding access to technology and DE. It can be said that problems such as the lack of interaction and communication related to DE constitute a small part of the problems experienced. It is necessary to educate students and instructors about DE technologies and their use. However, it is important to ensure that students and instructors access the technical infrastructure necessary for DE.

In the teaching practice carried out with DE, the participants stated that they had problems such as not being able to communicate with the teacher during the practice process and not gaining sufficient experience in the teaching profession. The participants think that they will have problems in their professional lives due to the mentioned situation. For this reason, it is necessary to make compensation applications for students after the pandemic. It can be suggested that the instructors be in more intensive communication with the practice teachers to avoid similar problems in remote applications in the next period.

This research was carried out in a geography where students in the middle and low socio-economic groups are located and in a newly established university. It is thought that it is important to examine the experiences of students studying at well-established universities in similar studies to be conducted.

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